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ASPIRA
OF
NEW YORK
INC.



ANNUAL
REPORT
1971-72

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Aspen
of NY Inc.
Annual Report
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Tan booklet

such a center awaits funding.

Staff have continued to represent Aspira at local and national conferences (including the national Chicano-Boricua Conference in Washington, D.C.), on panel discussions and City Government committees. Once again, a number of former Aspirantes returned to the agency to take counseling and community organizing jobs. Of a staff of 150, fifteen are ex-Aspirantes. The agency depends on the competence and commitment of its staff members more than on any other factor. We know that these young people are determined to help other students just as Aspira helped them. They keep the agency young and alive; they are a living proof of the Aspira process.

Members of the Aspira Board continue to be actively involved in community and educational affairs: Oscar Garcia-Rivera served on the staff of the New York State Special Commission on Attica and then joined the faculty of law at Hofstra University as Associate Professor of Law; Dr. Francisco Trilla was appointed a member of the Board of Higher Education of the City of New York and, in mid-1972 was presented with the Milton M. Bergerman Award of the Citizens Union of the City of New York for outstanding voluntary civic service; Angela Cabrera

continued her wide range of public service activities—including service as a New York State Delegate-at-large to the Democratic National Convention in Miami Beach; various Board members joined with other lawyers in organizing the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, a group devoted to litigation of test cases involving Puerto Rican interests (Board member Victor Marrero became Chairman of the Board); and I was pleased to be reappointed by Mayor Lindsay in March 1972 to a full five-year term as a member of the Board of Directors of the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation.

The broader outside involvements of Aspira are made possible by its strong internal program and the continuity and loyalty of the staff. The regular high school programs continued to expand, and the number of Aspirantes entering college rose from 1035 to 1072. The total financial aid provided for post-secondary education increased from \$746,348 to \$816,686.

The College Retention Program completed its second full year of operation, with offices on seven college campuses in the metropolitan area providing specialized academic, career and financial

FOREWORD

This has been a challenging year for Aspira and for the New York Puerto Rican community in general. The City's awareness of its over one million Puerto Ricans reached a new peak. While there were many positive aspects to the community's emergence as a major factor in the life of the City, in the field of education the facts remained grim. Over half of the Puerto Rican community is under 20 years of age; however, instead of filling the schools, they are dropping out. The New York City high school drop-out rate of 70% for Puerto Rican students is tragically high. Most students drop out before reaching the tenth grade.

Today, people are taking a closer look at these harsh statistics, beginning to wonder why they exist and trying to come up with some answers. More than ever before, Aspira has been called on for information, advice and support in educational issues affecting Puerto Rican students. Aspira has been doing more, however, than giving advice—it has been leading the way. It must continue to do so.

There has been progress in bilingual education. At the repeated urging of the community and Aspira's former Executive Director, Louis Nieves, the Board of Education in the Spring of 1972 established a Bilingual Office,

with Aspira staff taking an active part in the planning sessions.

The experimental bilingual CREO (Creating Resources for Educational Opportunity) Program, administered by Aspira under a two-year grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity, has now completed its first year of operation. Students who previously had attended school sporadically, if at all, now stay for tutoring sessions after school and use the school premises for meeting purposes. Overall grades showed immediate and continued improvement.

Aspira is acting as plaintiff in a class action suit being brought against the Board of Education for its failure to provide adequate bilingual educational programs for the more than 100,000 predominantly Spanish-speaking students in the public school system.

Things are moving and it is Aspira's intention to see that they continue to move.

Out-of-town Puerto Rican communities have been in contact with Aspira. The Brentwood area of Long Island is the largest Puerto Rican community in the State outside the five boroughs. The community, with a high school population of 3,885, requested Aspira to open a Center there. A report on the feasibility of

A YEAR OF ACTION AND RESULTS

THE ASPIRA CENTERS

The counseling program is at the heart of the work of the Aspira Centers. This year, as before, high school freshmen, sophomores and juniors streamed through Aspira's three centers. Numbers alone, however, don't tell the story of Aspira's counseling program. It is the availability and the personal attention of the counselors that counts. The student can rely on his counselor to be accessible to talk over problems, not only educational difficulties, but personal worries too, which a parent might find difficult to understand. The counselors understand because they, themselves have experienced the same kind of home and school life: they have grown up with language difficulties; they have attended high schools in "El Barrio" where drugs are prevalent; they grew up in homes with incomes below the U.S. poverty level; and, most important, they have surmounted all these obstacles, they have made it through college and into a good job, a professional career.

Alongside the regular educational counseling sessions, tutorial programs, and Puerto Rican history and culture classes which are basic to each center, many special projects were undertaken:

- a "shadowing program"—students interested in medicine

made rounds with physicians for a day

- special seminars on drugs in the high school
- special exhibitions of Puerto Rican artists
- open house days for parents
- voter registration drive among the Puerto Rican community
- career orientation seminars
- argumentation and debate seminars to give practice in public speaking
- building up of a lending library
- setting up storefronts run by Aspirantes

It is through daily contact with high school students that Aspira staff in the centers become aware of what is going on daily in the schools. They are able to act promptly and effectively when necessary. In this way, staff at the Brooklyn Center became aware that the inefficient procedures for administering the College Entrance Examination Board's (CEEB) Preliminary Scholarship Aptitude Test / National Merit Scholarship Test (PSAT/NMS) were particularly discriminatory towards Puerto Rican and other minority students. Insufficient information and practically no advance warning had blocked 70% of New York City's Puerto Rican high school students from even registering for the tests. Aspira brought the situation to the attention of the

help to some 1,800 students.

The Parent-Student Guidance Program has encouraged and helped more parents to become active in, and better understand, their children's educational life. This has become particularly significant as decentralization made active community participation more of a reality in the City than ever before.

Louis Nieves, who had been with the agency for four years, and Executive Director for the last two, left the agency in July to take the position of Dean of Students at Livingston College of Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey. His personal contribution to the agency was incalculable. Aspira owes much of its present stability and effectiveness to his dedication. In late August, a search committee including Board members, staff and students selected Professor Mario Anglada of Queens College as his replacement. Professor Anglada formerly was a member of the faculty and administration at the University of Puerto Rico and an Assistant Secretary of Education for academic programs of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

José A. Cabranes

José A. Cabranes
Chairman of the Board
of Directors

facilities and services available to them.

In Brooklyn,

- Brooklyn's day camp for 7-12 year olds, based in the Aspira Center, included Puerto Rican history and culture classes; arts and crafts; health education and personal hygiene.

- Aspirantes worked with the South Side Mission in a block cleaning and house front painting campaign in the Williamsburg area, in liaison with local police and sanitation departments.

- A remedial reading and math program was centered at Boys High School Storefront.

- Aspirantes operated a health information service for the community based at the Bedford-Stuyvesant Health Center.

In the Bronx,

- Low traffic streets were closed to provide supervised athletics and group games for 8-16 year olds.

- A program was organized aimed at placing teenagers at jobs in city agencies, to provide first hand work experience in social service offices.

ASPIRA CLUBS FEDERATION (ACF)

Aspira clubs, 36 in all, based in high schools and Aspira centers across the city, now had a membership of 2,800.

It is at club meetings that Aspirantes have their first opportunity of getting together with each other regularly; discussing common problems; pointing out inadequacies in their schools; and, formulating plans to improve them.

The ACF is student-run. The students devise and implement their own constitution. Each club elects a president who represents the club at city-wide meetings. The delegates in turn elect the presidents and officers of the city wide Aspira Clubs Federation. Through trial and error, students learn the techniques of democratic action; learn about group organization; learn how to run an election; gain confidence in public speaking. Through this total experience their leadership qualities come out. They learn how to use power effectively and constructively. And, as a city wide federation of nearly 3,000 students, ACF is a group that today can command attention.

When a tuition fee was threatened by City University, the Aspira college students were able to call on the ACF for their support. As a result of

Board of Education and CEEB at the highest levels, and successfully obtained a postponement of the registration date. This postponement, combined with a city-wide registration and information drive from all three centers, resulted in the registration of the majority of students who had been blocked.

Another instance of Aspira staff acting as advocates in a community educational crisis occurred when the position of Principal at 98% Puerto Rican PS 19 in Brooklyn fell vacant. The community, after organizing a Search Committee, recommended a highly qualified Puerto Rican candidate, currently holding the position of Assistant Principal at another high school. The recommendation was ignored and the community's candidate was not even considered for the post. During the conflict that ensued, Aspira provided the community committee with supportive services and put their expertise to work on the community's behalf in presenting the case to the Board of Education.

SUMMER PROGRAMS

With unemployment among teenagers still running very high, Aspira determined to make July and August a constructive period for as many Aspirantes as possible.

A city-wide program was designed which enabled some 300 Aspira Club members to learn the practical requirements of community involvement. Programs focused on action at two levels: younger Puerto Ricans in need of educational support; and adult community needs in health care and consumer buying practices.

The programs were based at Aspira centers in Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx and were made possible by a special grant from the Human Resources Administration.

In Manhattan,

- Aspira obtained the use of a school building for July and August to hold a day camp for 8-12 year olds. The program provided remedial tutoring in reading, writing and arithmetic; Puerto Rican history and culture classes; and athletics.

- Students carried out a consumer affairs study by scouting stores on the Lower East Side. They informed the community of their findings, and took the necessary action against offenders through the NYC Office of Consumer Affairs.

- Student teams carried out an evaluation of health services in certain areas on the Lower East Side and East Harlem, and informed the community of the

to talk person to person with representatives from every type of college, from all parts of the country. A great deal of preparation goes into the meeting. Each student is registered and counseled individually beforehand so that he goes to the meeting having made a choice of three colleges.

In many instances, this first meeting results in a decision, an early application submitted and an early acceptance into the chosen college. This year, a two day session was planned to allow time for informal meetings between college and high school students, college representatives and Aspira staff as well as panel discussions and the regular counseling sessions. The entire campus of Fordham University at Lincoln Center was used for the occasion. An unprecedented number of college representatives attended, coming from as far away as California, to meet the 2,000 Puerto Rican high school juniors who streamed in during the two days. College representatives recorded their opinions of Aspira's work in arranging the meeting: "Very good, very lively panels. . . organization was one of the best I've ever seen. . ." (Colby)— "The conference was very well organized and very well attended. The interviews were excellent. . . the students, well screened and very well informed." (Smith)— ". . .

organization and structure was very well done. The contact with the high school students was very beneficial." (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)— "The activity was very well organized and informative. What I like most about the panels was that the students gave honest opinions." (University of Vermont)— "I want to be invited again. The Aspira staff members, as moderators, kept panels on track and kept things moving." (College of Saint Rose).

Another facet of S&LC's operations this year was the increasing interest in Aspira's services outside the metropolitan area. In November, at the request of North Rockland High School, it was arranged for a group of 30 Puerto Rican high school seniors to make a special visit to the S&LC for an intensive all day counseling session. It is students from this kind of isolated Puerto Rican community who are, perhaps, in most need of Aspira's services.

In March, Lyndon State College, Vermont, invited a group of Aspirantes to visit their campus and those of three neighboring colleges. They were interested in and impressed by the Aspira program. As a result, all of the students who submitted applications were accepted with some kind of financial aid. A good

the ACF network over 500 high school students rallied to protest the pending action. The demonstration was well covered by the television and press. Thus, through organization, the Puerto Rican student voice was heard.

The ACF is a recognized voice in the City's official educational world also. Channel 25, the Board of Education station invited representatives from the ACF to take part in a series of panel discussions on the subject "Youth and the Law." ACF members were also called to testify at the Federal civil rights hearings in New York.

The ACF plays an active part in Aspira policy and decision making through the four high school and two college students who sit on the Aspira Board. Each year, these student board members fulfill a dual function; they act as watchdogs for student interests and they keep the board up to date with student affairs. This kind of interaction between board and students is a vital part of the Aspira process.

SCHOLARSHIP AND LOAN CENTER

Aspira's Scholarship and Loan Center works with high school seniors. Having spent at least two years coming to their Aspira Center for tutorials and

counseling sessions, they have decided on post secondary education. Now they need factual advice and guidance; they need to know precisely what opportunities are open to them; which colleges offer the best courses in their chosen subject; what fields offer the best job opportunities; where they are going to live; how they can manage financially. The Scholarship and Loan Center is expert in this area; they know the student's own personal case history, his strengths and his weaknesses. They know the college field and what is available, they have a personal relationship with college admissions officers in many cases; they can explain the differences between private, city, state and technical schools, between four-year and two-year colleges and what is involved with each. Perhaps most important of all, they know where to find the essential financial aid; can help with bank loans, can give helpful advice on budgeting and even help find part time jobs. S&LC statistics for this year reflect their success. 1072 students placed in colleges nationwide, \$816,686 in financial aid found for these students.

The student has his first encounter with the S&LC's function at the end of his junior year when he attends the annual college interview meeting. It is a vitally important meeting for students—the first opportunity

CREO PROGRAM

The CREO (Creating Resources for Educational Opportunity) Program, in operation since September 1971, is the most recent and most ambitious addition to the Aspira program. In a major departure from standard high school instruction, a pilot group of Puerto Rican juniors from Benjamin Franklin High School in East Harlem are attending the CREO School, administered by Aspira under a \$500,000 two-year O.E.O. grant.

Board of Education Chancellor, Harvey B. Scribner, who paid an informal visit to the school in February, demonstrated the growing awareness of the need for bi-lingual education for New York's Puerto Rican students. "I see CREO as the beginning of a systematic effort to increase specialized services to segments of the student population with more particularized needs," he commented. "We must move toward satisfaction of those needs in a departure from the concept that the school system can offer a universal program which is equally suitable for all."

The students in the demonstration project were selected according to characteristics usually shared by school drop-outs such as low attendance and poor scores

on standardized reading and achievement tests. The goals of Aspira's CREO project, aimed at establishing a precedent for bi-lingual education, are to reduce the 70% drop-out rate and raise performance to levels that would ensure graduation from high school and qualify seniors for admittance to post-secondary institutions. Currently only 20% of Puerto Rican high school seniors go on to college, in contrast with 54% of all seniors in New York City.

The CREO School, located at 185 East 116th Street, has been working on an intensive 8:00-4:00 schedule with a staff of four Puerto Rican teachers for the core subjects of English / Spanish, Math, Science and History. The CREO program represents an innovation in teaching techniques by its use of bi-lingual teachers; a supportive program of intensive personal and academic counseling; and involvement of parents to deal with school-related family and social pressures.

The students themselves publish a monthly newsletter, containing poems, interviews, clothing designs, quizzes and most important, an honest, running analysis of the school itself, its successes and failures, the teaching staff, the facilities and the attitudes of the students.

relationship such as this, between an Aspira staff member and a college admissions officer opens up new possibilities for inner-city students.

COLLEGE RETENTION PROGRAM

The College Retention Program serves the Puerto Rican student when he has successfully reached college. The program was set up to counteract the drop-out rate of Puerto Rican students in college, since the Puerto Rican community can ill afford to lose the comparatively few of its students who have made it to that level of education. With a main office on 14th Street and offices on the campuses of Fordham, Hunter, John Jay, LIU, Manhattan College, NYU and Pace, Aspira counselors cope with the special difficulties encountered by Puerto Rican students. These fall into two basic areas

Lack of financial aid: In 90% of the cases, drop outs are traced to insufficient financial aid. It is Aspira's view that no student should ever be forced to drop out because of financial difficulties

Curriculum and the College System: The student is not accustomed to the new discipline of college life and may become discouraged; he may have taken on an overwhelming schedule or unsuitable program and feel like giving up, he may feel he has come to the wrong school

Both these types of difficulties can be effectively handled by Aspira College Retention Program counselors

A special graduate studies program resulted in student placements in graduate school in law, social work, education, business, economics, clinical psychology, Latin American studies, biology and medicine

Perhaps the most successful field has been medicine. The special health careers program helped 14 students gain admittance to medical school and arranged an extra tutorial program during the spring semester in cooperation with Mt Sinai Medical School. According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, the national enrollment of first year mainland Puerto Rican students in medical school for 1971-72 totalled only 40 students (Aspira believes the figure may be even lower). Thus the Aspira group represents a 36% increase in Puerto Ricans entering medical school nationally. A similar program for graduate students in law has been developed for next year and awaits funding

in a variety of educational and community activities:

- six parents taking part in the program were nominated for parent association offices
- visits were made by parents individually and in groups to school principals and guidance counselors
- parents attended two sessions on the New Math
- one parent represented the program at a school faculty meeting
- another was a guest speaker at a Parent Association meeting
- many parents attended Aspira's two-day college interview conference to find out for themselves what was in store for their children.

In these ways, parents gain new confidence and are able to pass on information and give advice within the community.

As a result of their continuous working relationship with junior high schools, PSGP counselors received requests to conduct training sessions for new teachers in districts with a large Puerto Rican student population. These sessions were so successful that the schools have asked for this type of training to be continued.

For the first time, these young people are actually experiencing education as a positive, and constructive part of their lives. Attendance records, which reflect this new attitude, show that virtually all students are attending full-time.

Before joining the CREO School, about one-half of the group failed to attend Benjamin Franklin on any regular basis at all and the others attended erratically. Now, in contrast, during mid-semester breaks, and vacations, many students came voluntarily to school to do additional studies, meet with faculty and their fellow students and to help in painting and construction jobs around the school.

To complete the first year at the CREO School, it was arranged for the students to spend a month at summer school in Puerto Rico. The primary purpose of the program was to test the achievements of the first year of operation and to help formulate the best program for the second year. The program included regular classes in academic subjects each morning, and various trips to acquaint the group with the history and culture of the Island. For most of them, it was their first visit to their "homeland."

PARENT STUDENT GUIDANCE PROGRAM

The Parent Student Guidance Program provides a vital service to the Aspira program, working with parents of junior high school students. Parents, often Spanish-speaking, find the New York City educational system daunting. If their child needs help at school, they do not know where to turn for it. The prospect of a visit to the school is intimidating: who do they ask for? where do they go? do the teachers speak Spanish? will they be sympathetic? These fears are basically due to a lack of confidence, stemming in part from a lack of information. But also involved is a cultural tradition which is simply inappropriate to the public education scene in New York City. PSGP provides the information and support.

Parents, although wanting the best for their child, often do not know how to articulate and implement their desires. They find the idea of college overwhelming and cannot relate it to their own child; they do not understand the study requirements and therefore cannot give the support needed. PSGP explains the benefits and mechanics of a college education in fundamental terms.

Over 200 parents took part in this year's program and as a result have become involved

Private Colleges and Universities—

Academy of Aeronautics	5	Merrimach College	1
Adelphi University	4	Mt. Holyoke	2
Alaska University	1	Mount Ida Jr. College	1
Amherst	1	N.Y. Inst. of Tech.	1
Antioch College	1	New York University	20
Air Force Academy	1	Northeastern University	1
Atlantic Union College	3	Norwood Institute	1
Bard College	1	Oberlin College	1
Barnard College	8	Pace College	11
Boston University	4	Pratt Institute	5
Bowdoin College	1	Princeton University	2
Brandeis University	2	Pennsylvania University	1
Brown University	1	Polytechnic Inst. of Brooklyn	4
Catholic University	4	Rensselaer Polytechnic	2
Colgate University	1	Rosary Hill	1
Colby College	1	San Francisco State College	1
College for Human Service	1	Sarah Lawrence	1
College of Mt. St. Vincent	1	Simmons College	1
Columbia College	10	St. Francis College	1
Cooper Union	1	St. John's University	8
Cornell University	4	Skidmore College	1
Dartmouth College	1	Smith College	2
Duquesne University	1	Swarthmore	1
Elizabeth Seton College	2	Syracuse University	6
Fairleigh Dickinson	2	Taft College	1
Florida Institute of Tech.	1	Trinity College	1
Fordham University	28	Tufts University	2
Friends World College	1	Union College	1
Graham Jr. College	1	University of Arkansas	1
Hamilton College	1	University of Bridgeport	1
Hampshire College	3	University of Chicago	2
Hartwick	1	University of Connecticut	2
Harvard University	2	University of Dayton	1
Hobart College	4	University of Florida	1
Hofstra University	4	University of Hartford	2
Ithaca College	2	University of Michigan	1
Inter-American University	7	University of the Pacific	1
Jersey City State	1	University of Pennsylvania	2
Johnson State College	3	University of Puerto Rico	4
Kansas College	1	University of Rochester	3
Keuka College	2	Vassar College	1
Kirkland College	2	Wagner College	4
Long Island University	6	Wells College	1
Lyndon State College	3	Western College	1
Manhattan College	6	Wesleyan University	1
Manhattan Inst. of Tech.	1	West Liberty College	1
Manhattanville	1	William Smith College	1
Marist College	1	Wilmington College	1
Marymount Manhattan	8	Yale University	5

COLLEGE PLACEMENT 1972

Private colleges	320
City University of New York	612
State University of New York	92
Vocational and Technical Schools	23
Other programs	25
TOTAL	1072

FINANCIAL AID AWARDED

	COLLEGE RETENTION	SCHOLARSHIP AND LOAN
Work Study	\$ 9,655	\$ 40,127
Educational Opportunity Grants	32,949	86,156
Federal Loan (NDSL)	32,250	91,110
State Scholarships		
(HEOP, Incentive, Regents)	104,840	66,950
Institutional Scholarships	43,240	410,946
Graduate Scholarships	73,320	
Aspira Loans & Grants	500	
Private Scholarships	2,925	85,397
Model Cities	2,965	
State Loans		
Misc. (stipends)	18,650	36,000
TOTALS	\$321,294	\$816,686

ASPIRANTES ENTERING COLLEGE—1972

City University of New York		State University of New York	
Baruch College	25	Agricultural & Tech. College at Farmingdale	7
Borough of Manhattan Comm. College	50	Albany State University	17
Bronx Comm. College	48	Binghamton	2
Brooklyn College	56	Buffalo	1
City College	59	Cobleskill	1
Hostos Comm. College	9	Sullivan County Comm. College	1
Hunter College	75	Courtland	2
John Jay School of Criminal Justice	21	Fashion Inst. Tech.	10
Kingsborough Comm. College	23	Morrisville	1
La Guardia Comm. College	2	New Paltz	7
Lehman College	48	Old Westbury	4
Medgar Evers College	9	Oneonta	2
New York City Comm. College	44	Oswego	1
Queensborough Comm. College	34	Plattsburg	2
Richmond College	1	Purchase	1
Staten Island Comm. College	12	Rockland Comm. College	6
Vorhees Technical College	4	Stony Brook	4
York College	12	Urban Center	1

ACCOUNTANTS' REPORT

To the Board of Directors of
Aspira of New York, Inc.:

We have examined the balance sheet of ASPIRA of NEW YORK, INC. as of June 30, 1972 and the related statement of financial activities and changes in fund balances for the year then ended. Our examination was made in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards, and accordingly included such tests of the accounting records and such other auditing procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances.

In our opinion, the aforementioned financial statements present fairly the financial position of Aspira of New York, Inc. at June 30, 1972 and the results of its operations for the year then ended, in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles applied on a basis consistent with that of the preceding year.

Lybrand, Ross Bros. & Montgomery

New York, August 15, 1972.

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* Union Carbide Corp.
United States Steel Corp.
Western Electric Co.
Westinghouse Corp.
F. W. Woolworth Co.
Xerox Corp.

FOUNDATION, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION CONTRIBUTORS

Marion R. Ascoli Fund
The Louis Calder Foundation
Sam & Louise Campe Foundation
Carnegie Corporation
Robert Sterling Clark Foundation
College Entrance Examination Board
David Dubinsky Foundation
Field Foundation
ILGWU
The Esther A. & Joseph Klingenstein Fund
Levitt Foundation
Henry and Louise Loeb Foundation
The Madeleine M. Low Fund
Las Madrinas de Aspira
Pforzheimer Foundation
Police Department Charity Fund
J. L. Poses Foundation
The Puerto Rican Family Institute
Riverside Church
Rockefeller Brothers Fund
S & H Foundation
Scherman Foundation
DeWitt Wallace Fund

GOVERNMENT GRANTS

City of New York Council Against Poverty
Commonwealth of Puerto Rico
U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity
Special Services, U.S. Office of Education
Talent Search, U.S. Office of Education

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